

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS  
AMARILLO DIVISION

DEONTAE CALDWELL,  
TDCJ-CID No. 01903202.

Plaintiff,

V.

BILL CLEMENTS MAIL ROOM *et al.*,

## Defendants.

2:19-CV-020-Z-BR

U.S. DISTRICT COURT  
NORTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS  
FILED  
FEB 18 2022  
CLERK, U.S. DISTRICT COURT  
By \_\_\_\_\_ Deputy \_\_\_\_\_

**MEMORANDUM OPINION AND ORDER  
DISMISSING CIVIL RIGHTS COMPLAINT**

Before the Court is Plaintiff's civil rights complaint brought pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1983 against the above-referenced Defendants (ECF No. 3) ("Complaint"), filed January 23, 2019. Plaintiff filed suit *pro se* while incarcerated in the Texas Department of Criminal Justice ("TDCJ"), Correctional Institutions Division. Plaintiff was granted permission to proceed *in forma pauperis*. For the reasons discussed herein, the Court **DISMISSES** Plaintiff's Complaint.

## FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Plaintiff alleges that in December of 2018 he was supposed to receive mail from Harris County or the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals (“TCCA”). ECF No. 3 at 4. Plaintiff contacted both Harris County and the TCCA when he failed to receive the expected correspondence. *Id.* Plaintiff asserts that neither Harris County nor the TCCA could provide him with the expected correspondence. *Id.* Plaintiff thus concludes Defendants unlawfully disposed of his correspondence. *Id.*

## LEGAL STANDARD

When a prisoner confined in any jail, prison, or other correctional facility brings an action with respect to prison conditions under any federal law, the Court may evaluate the complaint and dismiss it without service of process, *Ali v. Higgs*, 892 F.2d 438, 440 (5th Cir. 1990), if it is frivolous,<sup>1</sup> malicious, fails to state a claim upon which relief can be granted, or seeks monetary relief from a defendant who is immune from such relief. 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915A, 1915(e)(2). The same standards will support dismissal of a suit brought under any federal law by a prisoner confined in any jail, prison, or other correctional facility, where such suit concerns prison conditions. 42 U.S.C. § 1997e(c)(1). A *Spears* hearing need not be conducted for every *pro se* complaint. *Wilson v. Barrientos*, 926 F.2d 480, 483 n.4 (5th Cir. 1991).<sup>2</sup>

## ANALYSIS

Prisoners are entitled to “a reasonably adequate opportunity to present claimed violations of fundamental rights to the courts.” *Bounds v. Smith*, 430 U.S. 817, 825 (1977). Prison officials may not abridge or impair an inmate’s right of access to court. *See Ex parte Hull*, 312 U.S. 546, 549 (1941); *Johnson v. Avery*, 393 U.S. 483, 486 (1969). “While the precise contours of a prisoner’s right of access to court remain obscure, the Supreme Court has not extended this right to encompass more than the ability of an inmate to prepare and transmit a necessary legal document to a court.” *Brewer v. Wilkinson*, 3 F.3d 816, 821 (5th Cir. 1993).

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<sup>1</sup> A claim is frivolous if it lacks an arguable basis in law or in fact. *Booker v. Koonce*, 2 F.3d 114, 115 (5th Cir. 1993).

<sup>2</sup> *Green vs. McKaskle*, 788 F.2d 1116, 1120 (5th Cir. 1986) (“Of course, our discussion of *Spears* should not be interpreted to mean that all or even most prisoner claims require or deserve a *Spears* hearing. A district court should be able to dismiss as frivolous a significant number of prisoner suits on the complaint alone or the complaint together with the *Watson* questionnaire.”). Dismissals may also be based on adequately identified or authenticated records. *Banuelos v. McFarland*, 41 F.3d 232, 234 (5th Cir. 1995).

To prevail on a claim that his right of access to court has been violated, a prisoner must demonstrate prejudice or harm by showing that his ability to pursue a “nonfrivolous,” “arguable” legal claim was hindered by a defendant’s actions. *See Christopher v. Harbury*, 536 U.S. 403, 415 (2002); *Lewis v. Casey*, 518 U.S. 343, 351 (1996); *Johnson v. Rodriguez*, 110 F.3d 299, 311 (5th Cir. 1997). He must identify the nonfrivolous, arguable underlying claim. *Id.* No constitutional violation exists when a prisoner has time to submit legal documents in a court despite impediments caused by officials. *Richardson v. McDonnell*, 841 F.2d 120, 122 (5th Cir. 1988). A civil rights claim cannot be based on “minor and short-lived impediments to access” in the absence of actual prejudice. *Chandler v. Baird*, 926 F.2d 1057, 1063 (5th Cir. 1991).

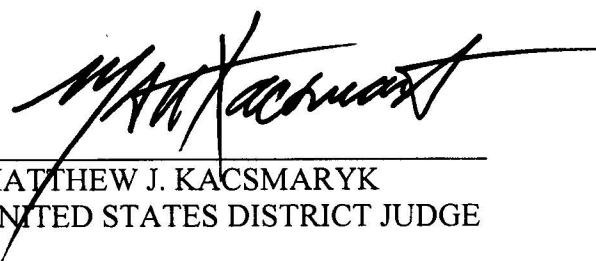
Plaintiff has not identified how the failure to receive the expected document interfered with his access to the courts. *See* ECF No. 3. As such, Plaintiff has failed to state a claim upon which relief can be granted. The Court **DISMISSES** Plaintiff’s Complaint.

#### **CONCLUSION**

For the reasons set forth above and pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915A, 1915(e)(2) and 42 U.S.C. § 1997e(a), the Court **ORDERS** Plaintiff’s Complaint filed pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1983 be **DISMISSED** for failure to state a claim upon which relief can be granted.

#### **SO ORDERED.**

February 18, 2022



MATTHEW J. KACSMARYK  
UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE